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## “THE RISING TIDE OF SOCIALISM”: A STUDY

### I

In the spring of 1910 the Socialist party of America won its first considerable political victory. One year later the followers of the red flag claimed successes in thirty-three states and in nearly two hundred municipalities; and at a national conference of Socialist mayors and aldermen held recently, the boast was made that more than five hundred representatives of the faith had been elected to office in the legislatures and local corporations of the United States.

This sudden advent of so large a body of office-holders, representing a wide range of territory and locality, coming as it does in a period of comparative industrial and political normality, strongly suggests the speedy rise of the Socialist party and the Socialist creed to a position of permanent consequence in the United States.

The Socialists themselves have, of course, made the most of this suggestion. Socialism must hereafter be reckoned with in America as a great political force. Their opponents, however, have remained unconvinced. These victories are merely the result of a train of fortuitous circumstances. Socialism still has no chance to root in American soil.

The bare fact of these successes, it is evident, proves little. Socialism of some sort has apparently become of considerable

importance in our local politics; but the real character and significance of this new force, its strength and permanency—whether it is something to cause the mighty to tremble and the lowly to rejoice; whether it is a grim but passing danger, a sign of social uplift, or a huge political joke—these questions cannot be settled by mere counting of officials or by partisan feeling. What we need to know in order to answer them is the true inwardness of these Socialist victories. What was the inner nature of this triumphant Socialism? Were a majority of these office-holders actually elected on a Socialist ticket and the Socialist platform? What was the nature of their support? Were they put into office “because of their creed or in spite of it”? Were they elected, after contest, to significant offices in important municipalities?

These questions are of vital importance to the American people. They require for their decision a detailed and candid study of facts and causes in the newly “socialized” communities. To this end, during the past summer, some six hundred letters of inquiry were sent out by the writer to members of all parties in places where the Socialist successes have occurred. What follows represents the net results of the investigation.<sup>1</sup>

## II

The Socialist office-holders in the United States, concerning whose election and present tenure there can be no reasonable doubt, number not less than 435. They hail from 33 states and represent about 160 municipalities and election districts.<sup>2</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> The writer wishes especially to acknowledge the cordial co-operation of J. Mahlon Barnes, former national secretary of the Socialist party, and of W. J. Ghent of Washington, in obtaining this information.

<sup>2</sup> The figures for office-holders given above include not only those who were elected in 1911, but also the successful candidates of preceding years whose terms of office have not expired and who are not known to have resigned or to have been unseated. It is but fair to state that the figures for both officers and municipalities concerned fall considerably short of the Socialist claims which have not been positively disproved. The utmost difficulty has been experienced in the attempt to verify election reports. In many cases letters of inquiry have remained unanswered. In others, partial and conflicting reports have been received. In the analysis of returns a certain number of claims were disallowed because the reports were proved to be unfounded or the officers elected were shown not to have been members of the Socialist party at the time of their election. Those remaining were divided into two classes: (1) verified,

point of function they include 1 congressman, 1 state senator, 16 state representatives, 28 mayors, village presidents, and township chairmen, 3 city commissioners, and 167 aldermen, councilors, and village and township trustees. Sixty-one others occupy important executive, legislative, and departmental positions, so that considerably more than one-half may be said to hold major legislative or municipal positions. Of those remaining it is noteworthy that 15 are assessors, 62 are school officials,<sup>3</sup> and 65 are connected with the work of justice and police.<sup>4</sup>

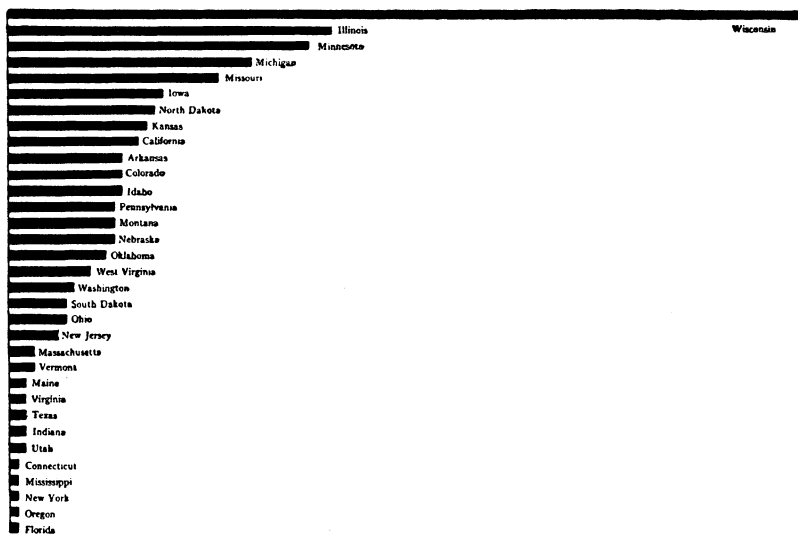
By reference to the accompanying charts and map it will appear that the stronghold of Socialism is in the Middle West. The single state of Wisconsin furnishes approximately 22 per cent of all the Socialists in office while ten contiguous states grouped

(2) claimed, with insufficient evidence to verify. In the case of officials this unverified or doubtful class numbered 99; in the case of municipalities, 28. It is possible therefore that the number of Socialists at present holding office in this country may be somewhere near 534, and that they may represent in the neighborhood of 188 municipalities and election districts. If the question turned on the number of officials elected whose regular terms have not expired, the figures representing both proved and unproved claims would be slightly raised, owing to resignations and recalls. It is the opinion of the writer that further investigation would considerably augment the number of proved cases, as evidence and new cases were being discovered up to the time of going to press. Throughout this paper all statements in the text refer to verified cases unless otherwise definitely so stated.

<sup>3</sup> The Socialists hope to achieve much through the efforts of their taxation and school officers. In Milwaukee, especially, determined efforts are being made to lessen the relative burden of taxation in the poorer sections of the city and to force the business and well-to-do element to pay on higher valuations, while every Socialist assessor is supposed to be earnestly engaged in the effort to ferret out unlisted property. One such officer recently stated to the writer that he had successively raised the personal property tax of a certain individual, by increasing increments, from \$60,000 to \$160,000 in an endeavor to force him to exhibit his real holdings. "It goes to \$500,000 next time," he added; "we'll see then whether he will show up." This same tax officer—who has been returned three times in succession—is of the opinion that once in office a determined Socialist assessor may be practically sure of continuation. The Socialist school officials are endeavoring to adapt educational methods to the needs of the working class, and a more or less systematic effort is being made to put Socialist teachers into the classroom.

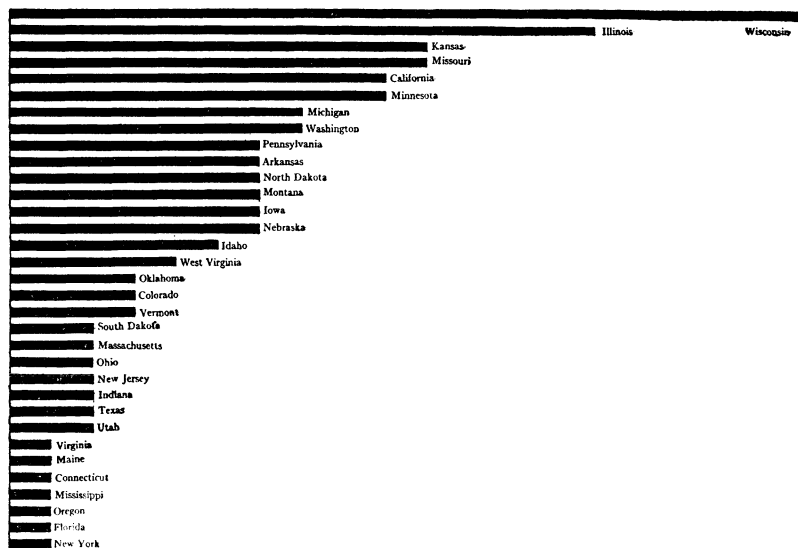
<sup>4</sup> The complete classified list of officials as reported and verified is as follows: congressman, 1; state senator, 1; state representatives, 16; mayors, etc., 28; city commissioners, 3; aldermen, etc., 167; city and township clerks, 11; recorders, 2; city, village, and township treasurers, 11; comptrollers, 2; city and district attorneys, 4; assessors, 13; listers, 2; judges and police magistrates, 34; clerk of court, 1; inspectors and judges of elections, 4; constables and marshals, 25; sheriff, 1; coroners, 6; school officers, 62; county commissioner, 1; supervisors, 31; surveyor, 1; park commissioners, 2; street and road officers, 6. In case of some officers listed as village and township trustees and as county supervisors a doubt exists whether they should not have been listed as school officials. Officers reported as appointed are not included in this list nor in the discussion, nor are officers whose election could not be proved beyond reasonable doubt.

CHART I



Showing by states the relative numbers of elected Socialists in office

CHART II



Showing by states the relative numbers of communities in which elected Socialists are in office.

near the center of this region are responsible for fully 70 per cent of them.<sup>5</sup> The East, aside from the mining states, is very scantily represented; the Old South is almost wholly untouched. Apart from the Middle West the main strength of Socialism, as thus indicated, lies in the mining region of the West and Northwest and on the Pacific coast—most notably in California.

Contrary to what might perhaps be expected, the bulk of the Socialist officials do not come from the large cities, nor are a majority of the cities concerned great population centers. The most conspicuous cases of Socialist success are in Milwaukee, Wis.; Berkeley, Cal.; Butte, Mont.; Flint, Mich.; Granite City, Ill.; Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Two Harbors, Minn.; Greenville, Mich.; Victor, Colo.; Wymore, Neb.; O'Fallon, Ill.; Thayer, Ill.; Cardwell, Mo.; South Frankfort, Mich.; Davis, Ill.; and Star City, W.Va. Milwaukee aside, these cities are fairly representative of the whole case. Only three of the other fifteen have more than ten thousand residents and ten fall below the five thousand mark. Star City,<sup>6</sup> Davis, South Frankfort, and Cardwell have populations respectively of 318, 352, 681, and 874. Of the 160 municipalities which elected Socialists to office, 33 are cities of 10,000 and more, 105 fall below 5,000, and 51 are townships, or cities and villages under 1,000. Although Milwaukee alone claims more than one-eighth of all the Socialists in office, fewer than one-third of the total represent communities of more than 10,000 inhabitants;<sup>7</sup> about 58 per cent are residents of places under 5,000, and something like one-third come from townships and communities of less than 1,000.<sup>8</sup> In short, the Socialist representation is mainly in small cities, villages, and townships.

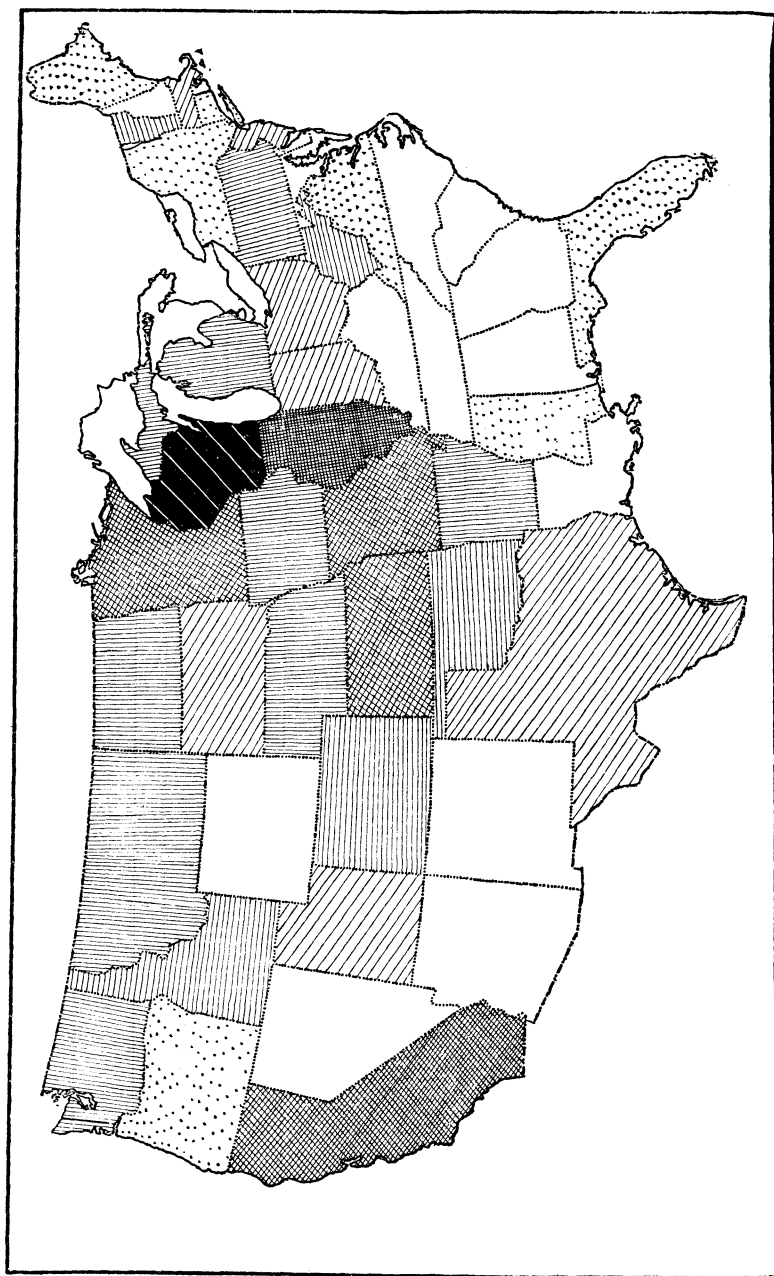
It would be a mistake, however, to assume that a majority of the Socialist officials represent prevailingly agricultural and non-industrial constituencies. This is well illustrated by refer-

<sup>5</sup> These states are: Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, Missouri, Iowa, North Dakota, Kansas, Arkansas, Nebraska. Five of these states, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, and Missouri, contribute fully one-half of the total number of officials.

<sup>6</sup> The vote for mayor in Star City was: Socialist, 45; Citizens, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Leaving Milwaukee out, about one Socialist official in five comes from a city with a population above 10,000.

<sup>8</sup> All statements in regard to population are based on Rand, McNally & Co.'s new (1910) *Census Supplement*. Township statistics are not given in the available Census reports.



Map showing the geographical distribution of Socialist officials. The intensity of shading indicates, for each state, the relative number of communities in which elected Socialists are in office.

ence to the conspicuous cases cited above. Milwaukee, Flint, Coeur d'Alene, Granite City, are manufacturing cities, Butte claims to be the largest mining camp in the world, and O'Fallon and Thayer are fairly good-sized mining towns. Victor has large ore-sampling works and lumber mills. Wymore is a railroad division point. Two Harbors is a railway and lake shipping port. Cardwell is reported as a small business and manufacturing place. Berkeley stands out alone in this list as an educational and residential city, and the distinctly agricultural communities are here not much in evidence.

In this respect, however, the showing is somewhat misleading. According to reports from 78 communities which elected Socialists, manufacturing was a conspicuous factor in 30, mining in 20, railroading and lake shipping in 14, agriculture in 35. Three reported as suburban towns. It is safe to assume, therefore, that a majority of the places in which the Socialists showed strength are apparently engaged in work connected with manufacturing, mining, and transportation, but the agricultural communities play a fairly conspicuous part. As the Socialists themselves put it, a good part of their strength comes from the "bush."

An examination of the grouping of the Socialist officials shows that the actual political power of the party is as yet exceedingly slight. Most of the successful candidates may be classified as scattering. In spite of the marked concentration of strength in the Middle West, only in Wisconsin, where thirteen Socialists sit in the state legislature,<sup>9</sup> is there any effective force outside particular municipalities. Even in the municipalities the cases of actual control are very few, and for the most part the Socialist officials are an ineffective minority—in many instances single, unimportant office-holders. Taking the 160 "socialized" cities, villages, and townships, 79 have but one Socialist official, and 118 but three; while not more than 17 have above five.<sup>10</sup> The only cities with a population exceeding

<sup>9</sup> The remaining Socialist state representatives are located as follows: Massachusetts, 1; Minnesota, 1; North Dakota, 1; Pennsylvania, 1.

<sup>10</sup> It must not be forgotten that these figures represent verified results only.



4,000 where the Socialists have a mayor and apparently a majority of the major officials are: Milwaukee, Berkeley, Butte, Coeur d'Alene, and Two Harbors. In such cases, however, much effective Socialist action in the larger sense is out of the question. "When the Socialists really try to do anything," says the city clerk of Milwaukee, speaking out of the bitterness of experience, "they not only have to go up against the obstructions of a minority in the council, but also against the limitations imposed by the city charter, the courts, and the state legislature." Under existing circumstances about the only thing the Socialists can do, therefore, is to give an honest and efficient administration.

This brief analysis of the bare objective facts connected with the recent Socialist successes brings out in clear relief the following significant points. Socialism has quite suddenly made its appearance in American politics as something more than a mere doctrinaire sect or party of protest. Its seat of power is in the Middle West; but it is not confined to any one section of the country. On the contrary, it is most markedly pervasive, its widespread successes indicating that beneath the surface it is a force developing throughout the country.<sup>11</sup> Nor is this force confined to any one class of communities. While manufacturing, mining, and railroad centers stand conspicuous in Socialist successes, small country towns and purely agricultural communities contribute largely to the total; and even residential and suburban communities figure in the count. On the other hand, to speak of Socialism as already a power in American politics is to deal altogether in hyperbole. Neither in the number of Socialist officials elected nor in the prevailing character of the communities which they represent, nor, again, in their distribution in those communities, is there more than a suggestion of power some time in the future. In the quality of this suggestion lies the true significance of these

<sup>11</sup> This statement is obviously enforced by the cases reported where the candidates barely fell short of election. These were many, and should be reckoned in estimating the Socialist strength. "The wonder is," says one of the party publications, "not so much how many cities we captured, but the large number we nearly captured, and also the phenomenal votes we cast in many places with a solid opposition." Unfortunately it has been impossible to secure any reasonably complete record of these "near successes."

Socialist successes. To determine this we must know their real nature and the causes which brought them about.

### III

The most varied interpretations of these Socialist successes have been offered. Because of their sudden appearance and widespread character there has been a tendency to look upon them as essentially similar in nature and to advance single all-inclusive explanations of them. Thus to some ardent Socialists and surprised conservatives they are evidence of the general development of class consciousness and the growing acceptance of the Socialist doctrines: true working-class victories, therefore the outcome of persistent "organization, agitation, and education." Others, not altogether discounting the essentially socialistic character of the results, attribute them mainly to the present wave of insurgency and radicalism, helped on by the buncombe of self-seeking politicians and the teachings of misguided uplifters and college professors. "La Folletteism," writes one correspondent, "has made more Socialists in this community than any other one factor." "In both the Republican and Democratic party," says a prominent member of the Illinois legislature, "there have been a body of men posing as progressives or reformers, who have been enunciating the most advanced and the most incendiary doctrines, absolutely revolutionary in themselves, and vying with each other as to which one could be most inflammatory. . . . In all of their efforts they have been aided by the theorists of your school and other schools of a similar type. . . . I regard the increase in the cause of Socialism to be largely due to the teachings of those to whom I have above referred." A third class of observers explain the general influence which the Socialists seem to be gaining by a lack of intelligence and education on the part of the common people. From Missouri comes this statement: "The socialist success was first due to *eliteracy*, 2d to dissatisfaction in the democratic party, 3d to socialist literature which was eagerly *red* and accepted as facts by *the lower class*."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Italics mine.

In the majority of interpretations, however, Socialist doctrines and agitation do not rank as essential factors. Most prominent among the anti-socialistic explanations is the present evil state of city government as expressed in general corruption, bipartisan combinations and ring rule for the control of office and the sale of privilege, corporation control, unequal tax burdens, and general inefficiency and waste. To those who emphasize this aspect of the case the Socialist party has been simply a temporary means used by all classes of the people to oust the old politicians and secure a general clean-up, or, in some places, a change in the form of government.

Other statements of efficient causation are: the influence of the foreign element in our population; the growing strength and radicalism of trade-unionism; the recrudescence of populism; the disquieting effect of high prices; general political discontent and desire for change; apathy and carelessness in an off political year, and finally, purely local issues and conditions including city indebtedness, local industrial depressions and labor controversies, municipal-ownership contests and local-option fights, factionalism and cut-throat politics, the personal popularity or unpopularity of candidates, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

Without doubt each of these explanations has some validity, but a candid analysis of the conditions prevailing in the "socialized" municipalities is sufficient to disprove the inclusive character of any one of them.

In the course of this investigation enough reliable information was obtained in regard to forty-two representative localities<sup>13</sup> to allow of fairly positive generalizations. In regard to these cases the following statements may be made. In not more

<sup>13</sup> These were: Milwaukee, Wis.; Rockford, Ill.; Berkeley, Cal.; Racine, Wis.; Butte, Mont.; Flint, Mich.; Sheboygan, Wis.; Green Bay, Wis.; Muskegon, Mich.; Manitowoc, Wis.; San Bernardino, Cal.; Ft. Scott, Kan.; Canton, Ill.; Granite City, Ill.; Brainerd, Minn.; Grand Junction, Colo.; Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Grand Rapids, Wis.; Kalispel, Mont.; Two Harbors, Minn.; North Platte, Neb.; Greenville, Mich.; Coalgate, Okla.; Whitewater, Wis.; Belle Plain, Ia.; Fredonia, Kan.; Krebs, Okla.; Havelock, Neb.; Wymore, Neb.; Dalhart, Tex.; Girard, Kan.; Broken Bow, Neb.; O'Fallon, Ill.; Mellen, Wis.; Elroy, Wis.; Mechanics Falls, Me.; Edmonds, Wash.; Brantwood, Wis.; Thayer, Ill.; Cardwell, Mo.; Davis, Ill., and Ten Strike, Minn.

than 16<sup>14</sup> of them was Socialism the sole or predominant issue, and long-continued "organization, education, and agitation" figured in no more than 11. Not one was found in which Socialism of the ultra-radical type could be proved to be the main issue. The nearest approach to this situation occurred in some of the mining towns, in two or three cities where industrial conditions were temporarily bad or labor contests were on, and, curiously enough, in one or two little places in the "bush" where Socialism was apparently "the new thing."<sup>15</sup> So far as could be ascertained there was no single instance of an important Socialist victory won without the aid of a strong sympathetic vote cast largely by men who would not think of calling themselves Socialists or of being so called—many of them of the propertied class. Moreover, not more than 11 of these 42 cases could be called working-class victories in the sense that the predominant issue was the government of the city solely or mainly in the interest of the wage workers. Of these 11, at least 3 must be regarded as sporadic—the result of temporary industrial conditions. A majority of the elected Socialist officials can indeed be classed as working-men or "mostly working-men," but there is among them a goodly sprinkling of business-men and professionals. Of a list of 271 whose occupations were reported, 64 are engaged in some form of business or profession;<sup>16</sup> while of 18 Socialist mayors whose occupations were reported, two were ministers, two physicians, one a manufacturer, one a prominent lumber

"It is worth noting that seven of these towns are in Wisconsin; five are in communities in which miners are the dominant factor of the population; thirteen have a strong foreign element in the population—for the most part north European and largely German; and in thirteen trade-unionism is strong or fairly strong.

<sup>15</sup> In some cases strong prejudice ruled among the workers, especially in towns suffering from industrial warfare, but such cases, I believe, are the exception rather than the rule, due to a state of mind brought about by the closing down of factories, strikes, and lockouts. It is a notable fact that where the Socialist organization is long established and the successes are the outcome of persistent effort, and especially where some taste of responsibility has been had, the movement becomes broad and liberal.

<sup>16</sup> These 271 include 33 miners, 17 farmers and retired farmers, 45 factory workers and craftsmen, 14 transport workers, 5 lawyers, 9 physicians, and 3 saloon-keepers. In the analysis of occupations of officials the examination was not confined to the 42 cities taken for special study.

dealer, one a merchant, one a jeweler, one a saloon-keeper, and one a barber-shop proprietor.

Local issues were most varied and persistently intrusive. In regard to this, 86 communities made full or partial reports. In these elections the personal character of the candidates figured largely in 17; local option, prohibition, and liquor-law enforcement in 16;<sup>17</sup> corruption, inefficiency and maladministration, graft, and extravagance in 14; bipartisan combinations, boss and gang rule in 10; special cases of municipal ownership in 6;<sup>18</sup> general municipal ownership and control in 5; commission government in 5;<sup>19</sup> industrial depression and labor controversy in 5; public improvements in 4; factional fights in 3; general local dissatisfaction in 3; oppressive taxation in 2. Among other issues mentioned were disgust with old parties, vice, franchise-granting, law-enforcement, annexation, disincorporation, county-seat fight, La Folletteism and Governor Stubbs.<sup>20</sup> In the smaller places the election apparently often turned on very trivial matters. "Hitch-racks on the public square," "school economy by the Dutch," were explanations offered in two cases; while in a third "the fight swirled and thundered" about the problem of the retention or non-retention of a city engineer.<sup>21</sup>

There is no doubt that the Socialist creed and persistent "or-

<sup>17</sup> The Socialists were not consistent on this issue.

<sup>18</sup> The Socialists, of course, in all cases stood for the principle of municipal ownership.

<sup>19</sup> Commission government does not seem to have operated unfavorably to the Socialists. They elected three commission mayors and in a fourth case a motive given for voting the Socialist ticket was that thereby the old gang could be broken up and commission government secured.

<sup>20</sup> Many interesting special causes were shown to have figured sometimes in determining the results. Among these were minority representation and preferential voting. One Socialist mayor under the new preferential system received 362 out of 1,799 first-choice votes and stood third in the list but was elected by third-choice votes. A prominent cause of Socialist victories mentioned was "good, clean, young" men on the ticket as opposed to old, inefficient, and corrupt politicians.

<sup>21</sup> No opposition, Socialist running as an independent, lack of interest, apathy, no Socialist ticket in the field, not in good standing, good fellow, bad fellow, personal popularity, trade with the churches, religion, were phrases which altogether appeared thirty-two times in the explanations offered by correspondents. A well-known Socialist says that the socialist victories in the smaller places usually have nothing to do with the class struggle. "Bill Jones is storekeeper in Podunk; ninety of the hundred voters are friends of Bill. Bill happens to get hold of some Socialist literature and calls himself a Socialist. Bill's friends vote for him. Great Socialist victory!" It is but fair to say that this statement comes out of the mouth of an impossibilist.

ganization, agitation, and education" were factors in bringing about the recent Socialist successes, but further evidence is surely not needed to show that, standing alone, they do not account for a large proportion of them.

On the other hand, the case goes even harder with the remaining all-inclusive explanations. The fact that the stronghold of Socialism is in the Middle West, the home of insurgency and populism, would seem to lend some color to the notion that there is a causal connection between these movements and the Socialist advance. Doubtless to many farmers, especially of Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma, Socialism seems to be a substitute for the lost cause, and the evidence shows that in these states it is largely recruited from the members of the farming class. Doubtless, too, the preaching of the insurgent gospel in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois has influenced many to go a step farther than their mentors; but a study of the individual cases rules out both populism and insurgency as more than supposititious and minor factors. In all the letters of explanation received from men on the ground populism was only once mentioned and insurgency received but the slightest consideration.

A far stronger case can be made out for the belief that the present increase of Socialistic strength represents a general revolt against ring rule and corporation control in city politics, with their corollaries of corruption, unequal taxation, inefficiency, and waste. The determination to be rid of this sinister combination at any cost probably turned to the Socialists the greater part of their sympathetic vote and tipped the scale for them in some of their most important successes—notably in the cases of Milwaukee and Butte. Moreover, this sort of thing makes Socialists. Still the appeal to fact rules against attributing success solely or even predominantly to this cause. If the returns are to be trusted, probably in less than one-third of the actual cases were gang rule and corruption, with their concomitants, immediate issues. To make the proof stronger, there were, indeed, cases in which the Socialists won in a contest with reform city governments.

The notion that the growth of Socialism finds easy explana-

tion by reference to the foreign element in our population will as little stand scrutiny. That the north Europeans and especially the Germans have been to a great extent the fathers and leaders of American Socialism is true and very significant; that cities with a strong foreign element are conspicuous in the list of Socialist successes was shown in the preceding analysis; but a study of the ethnical character of the communities concerned in these successes shows the absurdity of trying to find here any general explanation. The 42 cases which received special study may be taken as ethnically fairly representative. Among these 42, 16 were distinctly American, and apparently untouched by any considerable foreign influence, while others were stated to be "prevailingly American," and "largely American."

Trade-union support also affords an insufficient explanation. In many places the unions did support the Socialist candidate loyally and in some the Socialist fight was really a union fight. A very large part of the Socialist vote was without doubt union in character. In this case as usual, however, the unions pursued no consistent political policy. Many of the Socialist successes occurred in places where no unions exist or where they are not a strong factor. In respect to this matter the testimony received was not complete nor in all cases consistent, but the following facts are a sufficient basis for the conclusion reached. In at least 14 of the 42 cases either there were no unions or they did not constitute a strong factor; in 4 others they were reported as divided politically; in only 13 was unionism reported to be a strong factor and at the same time one which actually gave the Socialists strong support.

Most of the remaining assumed explanations need little comment. General discontent and desire for change really mean nothing in this connection. High prices were mentioned as a contributing cause in but one instance. Apathy, carelessness, and lack of opposition were at most very minor operating causes.

Finally then, in the pursuit of a single, all-inclusive explanation, we are driven to local issues. Can these Socialist victories be explained as the result of a combination of purely local issues and circumstances in which the Socialists happened to be in all

cases the fortunate or favored party? The notion is attractive and the great variety of local issues and special causes lends considerable support to it. Of course in a sense all of these elections turned on local issues and conditions. There was no single case probably in which the tariff or the national monetary policy or even national Socialism was in question. In short even Socialism was a local issue. But if the phrase be thus widened it is not at all enlightening. If it be narrowed to include only non-Socialist issues and conditions not created by the Socialists then we are confronted with evidence that there was a not inconsiderable group of communities in which the situation was a clear-cut case of Socialism against the field and in which the Socialists won because of superior organization and a vigorous campaign of agitation and education.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly the attempt to give a single all-inclusive explanation of these Socialist successes is something which is bound to fail. In the pragmatic terminology, it will not work. The most that can be done in the way of truthful generalization is to see in these victories certain fairly distinct types<sup>23</sup> with reference to general character, conditions, and causes. If the matter is viewed thus, seven such types seem to stand out with a reasonable degree of definiteness.

There is first the clean-cut victory of a broad, liberal, opportunistic, moderate type of Socialism, of comparatively slow and solid growth. This type appears mainly in the Middle West, especially in Wisconsin and the states grouped immediately around it. The communities in which it occurs are for the most part manufacturing cities and railroad centers both large and small. These cities generally have a strong foreign element in the population; and Germans, especially, foster and guide the movement, which has a real working-class basis and strong trade-union support, but also a good deal of backing from the well-to-do and middle classes. This type of triumphant Socialism appears

<sup>22</sup> It has already been seen that in 16 of the 42 cases examined Socialism was the sole or predominant issue.

<sup>23</sup> It must not be understood that these types are intended to represent particular individual cases. Few if any actual cases would correspond exactly to the types. They are, however, the truest presentation in general terms of what is going forward.



to stand immediately for honest and efficient city administration, the equalization of tax burdens, the curbing of corporations, direct popular control of legislation and officials,<sup>24</sup> the improvement of labor conditions and of the housing, education, and amusements of the working people, and the greatest practicable extension of municipal ownership and control. It claims to be real Socialism because it is an integral part organically of the National Socialist party, and has always the Socialist creed in the background. The type of Socialist victory thus described may be said to have resulted primarily from long-continued organization and persistent agitation and education by the Socialists along moderate and progressive lines. It is most nearly represented in perhaps 7 or 8 of the 42 cases studied, among which should be placed Milwaukee.

The second type of Socialist victory is also the immediate result of long-continued "organization, agitation, and education," but represents a more class-conscious Socialism which places, perhaps, more emphasis on the ultimate Socialist ideas. It occurs mainly in a line extending through the Middle West and on into the Rocky Mountains. The most significant thing about it is that it is characteristically to be found in mining communities<sup>25</sup> and apparently owes its existence mainly to the mineworkers' union. It rests, therefore, very largely on the support of men with European blood in their veins, but the leadership in this case seems to come most largely from the English, Scotch, Welsh, and Americans. That there is apparently this special type of Socialist victory at mining centers in otherwise unaffected territory leads to the thought that there is something in the working environment of these miners which makes them think in different terms from those about them and gives them a different outlook on life and society. That this type seems to occur more often in the bituminous and far-western fields than in the anthracite, would seem to indicate that it is due largely to the leadership of the old English stock crowded west by the influx of the eastern

<sup>24</sup> Socialists require prospective candidates to place signed resignations in the hands of their local before nomination. If elected they are expected to retire from office when the organization demands this of them. The demand is made when they reject party control.

<sup>25</sup> Sometimes, however, at railroading and lake shipping centers.

and southern Europeans into the anthracite region. The successes which are best representative of this class also number 7 or 8 of the 42; but from the standpoint of size of communities are generally much less important than those of the first group.

These two types of victories include, I believe, the bulk of the successes which were not largely the result of issues hardly to be called Socialistic, and which at the same time rest mainly on long-continued and consistent organization and effort. Those which remain, and they are the large majority, rest on circumstances to a great extent fortuitous so far as theoretical Socialism is concerned, or represent quite new local organizations sometimes planted in communities which do not seem to furnish the economic soil essential to their continued development.<sup>26</sup>

Coming to this second division of Socialist victories, we find a third type based mainly on Socialist organization and agitation but occurring for the most part in small agricultural or semi-agricultural communities. Victories of this kind are pretty generally diffused but their special habitat seems to be in the old stronghold of populism. The brand of Socialism which they represent tends to be in outer seeming of the ultra-theoretical, blood-and-thunder variety; but an examination of the party membership in these cases often discloses a surprisingly large proportion of farmers and small business men. It is in fact neither well-rooted nor working-class Socialism. It is mainly but the outcome of the policy of the Socialist party in maintaining a permanent corps of speakers and organizers. These go into a small town, enlist the interest especially of the young men, and establish a local. At the next election a Socialist ticket is in the field backed by the young element. The political blood of the community is perhaps stirred strongly, in a purely local election, for the first time in years. The old crowd which has probably been accustomed to participate in lazy and perhaps non-partisan elections is taken by surprise and unable to cope with the up-to-date methods of the new party. A Socialist victory follows, but it is not a class-conscious victory, and another year or two may

<sup>26</sup> In short, many of these victories occur in places where there would seem to be no possibility of the development of real class differences and class consciousness.

find the wave of Socialist sentiment past and forgotten because there is really very little economic basis for it. If such an economic basis exists and the movement continues it tends to lose its ultra-theoretical character and to develop the opportunistic quality of Milwaukeeism. It is impossible to give any reasonable estimate of the relative weight of this type of Socialistic success. In point of number it probably exceeds either of the types already considered; so far as concerns the advance of Socialism it is educational mainly.

A fourth type of Socialist triumph in the recent elections was the outcome mainly of temporary industrial conditions. Every contest of magnitude between the employers and trade-unions is a Socialist opportunity and no such opportunity is neglected. Socialist organizers and newspapers throw themselves strenuously into the fight. The occasion is made use of for the preaching of Socialist doctrine and the pointing of Socialist morals. The outcome usually is a clear demarkation, for the time at least, of class lines, and an occasional Socialist success. The kind of Socialism which results is apt to be not so much theoretical as passionate,<sup>27</sup> and the political victory is distinctly working-class in character. A substantially similar situation sometimes develops out of local business collapse. Socialist success of this type is likely to occur in any community regardless of ethnical character. Just now it is to be looked for on the Pacific coast, especially in California. The result is apt to be temporary like the cause but it is in these spasms of industrial depression and warfare that the most fruitful seeds of radical Socialism are sown. It is the Otises, the Posts, the Parrys, the Van Cleaves, and the Kirbys who are most active in raising up revolutionary Socialism in this country.

A fifth and far more important type of Socialist success grows out of the generally deplorable state of American municipal politics and government. It is in the boss-ruled, corporation-ridden, tax-burdened city, with its poorly paved, ill-lighted, dirty streets, its insufficient water-supply and air-filled gas mains, its

<sup>27</sup> It was in connection with such a situation that a Socialist alderman recently remarked in the presence of the writer: "We have them all feeling that every man who has a dollar is a mean cuss."

industrial fire-traps, its graft-protected vice district, its fat politicians, untaxed wealth, crooked contracts, and wasted resources, that Socialism finds its best object-lessons and has won some of its most significant, if not its most numerous, successes. The Socialism which this civic condition breeds is primarily a gospel of reform and only secondarily creedalistic. It is in its immediate character one wing of the growing movement for honesty, efficiency, and democracy in the conduct of civic affairs. To the political roués the Socialists oppose clean, vigorous young men; to the stained-glass political platforms of the ringsters, honest statements of purpose and reason. The terminology, to be sure, is largely Socialistic; the appeal is primarily to the workers and the movement is declared to be in their interest. Municipal control is emphasized as a remedy; but the nominees are not confined to wage-workers, the support comes from all classes and nationalities, and the honest effort is made to conduct affairs in the interest of the people generally.<sup>28</sup>

The sixth type of Socialist success which may be distinguished is in a sense the obverse of the fifth. It results not so much from a desperate attempt to escape the present evils of city government as from a positive desire to uplift and ennoble it. The Socialism which it puts into power stands for honesty, efficiency, cleanness, law enforcement, and a large measure of municipal

<sup>28</sup> The whole case is fairly well illustrated in the following statement made by a non-Socialist living in a city which last spring elected a Socialist mayor and a Socialist majority of the major city officials: "For six years, the city had Democratic, Republican, and Democratic administrations in the order named. During all of them the city debt steadily increased, though all were elected on promises of economy and reduction of debt. All were suspected of graft, honest and otherwise. Gambling and other vices were alternately and by the same administration tolerated and partially suppressed. The revenue seemed to accomplish nothing substantial and permanent, though the burden of taxation seemed heavy. Abuses by the administration and abuses by the people which the administration failed to correct aroused resentment. High cost of living and depression in ———, the city's sole industry, had aroused uneasiness and discontent. The culmination came in the last administration, which, along with other evils as aforesaid, waged war on the civil service police force, near its close abolished the restricted district, and after receiving equal commendation and condemnation, allowed it to be re-established and, rumor hath it, for a very large consideration, and was forced to audit the city's books, which, made public on the eve of the election, showed the city indebted \$35 per capita and 100 per cent over the constitutional limit, with city warrants refused by the banks and at 10 per cent to 20 per cent discount . . . and the consequence was that without conscious co-operation, men of all political beliefs, classes, and occupations voted the Socialist ticket."

If the people of the United States wish to nourish the Socialist infant most likely to grow lusty, this is the pap on which to feed him.

ownership, because these are the good and righteous things. Doctrinally, it is moderate and idealistic. It makes its appeal to all good people, is apt to elect ministers and physicians as mayors, and makes combinations with the church-goers<sup>29</sup> and anti-saloon advocates. Its support is prevailingly American. Territorially it is to be looked for in the Far West, especially in California. As compared with types one, two, and five it is quantitatively of considerably less importance.

Finally there is a type of recent success which so far as significant Socialism is concerned must be regarded as altogether trivial and fortuitous. In such cases the Socialists have won not because of any special virtues or strength in themselves but as the result of factional squabbling, personal likes and dislikes, lack of opposition, petty local and personal issues, etc.<sup>30</sup> The instances have occurred generally in small towns, and townships. They bulk large with respect to number of places, but not especially so in number of officials elected. They have no special ethnical or territorial significance.

"It is not Christian Socialism, however. Christian Socialism, as such, appears to have played no appreciable part in determining the recent Socialist successes. The investigation emphasizes the well-understood fact that the Catholic church as an organization stands in opposition to Socialism, though it is shown that in some cases the Socialists are largely recruited from the Catholic membership.

"The quotations following represent the essential character of these victories:

"Elected on the board of selectmen but more by reason of personal popularity than from political reasons."

"We have a set of old retired farmers and as there was no issue someone started a ticket of young men and called it Socialist."

"The Citizens . . . allowed us to name one man for councilman on the Citizens' ticket."

"I am probably responsible for the nomination and election of our present mayor . . . as I was the first to bring him out. His being a Socialist, however, had nothing to do with my action or his election."

"My ward elected me, not for my Politics—as I have none—not for my Religion—as I have none—But my opponent Ran on the Repn. and Dem ticket combined. My friends Did the Trick."

"Few voters went to the polls. It was an off year and Socialism won by a fluke."

"This was an accident. He would not have been elected if the Republicans and Democrats had not neglected to nominate a candidate."

"This man . . . I wouldn't call him a Socialist. I would call him an Anarchist, but between the two evils we chose the lesser."

"Cumulative voting and minority representation."

"Dissatisfaction of many Republicans because their candidate for mayor had been induced to withdraw for the sake of harmony."

"Preferential system of voting which none knew how to use with effect."

"Very strenuous campaign for county local option, and a trade between the dries and the Socialists."

The types thus presented do not necessarily cover all the individual Socialist victories in the recent elections. Some of these were very special in character and probably none correspond in all respects to any typical case. Nor does this method bring out vividly all the operating causes.<sup>31</sup> But it seems to be the fairest and most enlightening manner of viewing the situation as a whole.

#### IV

Perhaps the most common conclusion of those who follow this study to the present point will be that the evidence presented does not after all show the existence of any real Socialism or bona fide Socialist election successes in the United States. On this point, however, the writer would take definite issue. Socialism like any other phenomenon of nature is what it is and not what the preconceptions of any person or set of persons would have it to be. What this study does show is that effective Socialism in this country is at present a young,<sup>32</sup> vigorous, and very protean movement, for the most part moderate, liberal, honest, and above all essentially democratic. What mainly differentiates it from the democracy of the crowd is that it rests on an evolutionary philosophy rather than on the classical eighteenth-century, absolutistic, natural-rights doctrine. It differs from the democracy of the up-to-date reformers in being somewhat more youthfully vigorous and thoroughgoing.

This social democratic movement, it is evident, is just beginning to gather force in the United States. Will it continue to develop and will it gain consistency? This depends upon two things—the manner in which the Socialists make use of their present opportunities, and the actions of their opponents. There is no doubt that the Socialists have a hard row to hoe before them. Wherever they become really formidable the old parties will tend to unite in opposition to them. This alone would cause the loss of many of their recent most important gains, for it is largely like the fox in the fable that they have secured the present

<sup>31</sup> The Socialists themselves are inclined to give great weight to the inspiration of the Milwaukee elections of 1910.

<sup>32</sup> A striking thing brought out by the evidence in hand is not only the youthful vigor of the movement but the young and vigorous quality of its membership.

political meal. They are bound also to lose much that they now hold, through mistakes, the result of inexperience, over-anxiety to make a good showing,<sup>33</sup> and the disappointment of the exaggerated expectations of their followers.<sup>34</sup> That the Socialists of the Middle West realize their weakness due to inexperience and recognize that their first task is to learn to run a city government was clearly brought out at the conference of mayors and aldermen in Milwaukee last August.<sup>35</sup> Still a majority of the present gains are bound to be lost from one cause or another.<sup>36</sup> Where the present officials are not backed by a strong and experienced party organization these losses are likely to be permanent. Battle-scarred movements like that of Milwaukee will of course survive such disaster and come back stronger. Moreover, the encouragement of the present successes and the organic character and activity of the Socialist party will insure new recruits for those cities which drop out of the ranks. Few realize how many voters there are in this country who would have acted with the Socialists before this had they felt that there was any chance of success. Many of this class are now joining the party and will remain in it unless the set-back is too decided.<sup>37</sup> However, the outcome will depend much upon how far and how long the old party politicians continue to tempt the gods.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> In the judgment of the writer, the present administration of Milwaukee is running the risks of grave mistakes, and is therefore courting defeat, by trying to do too much, especially in the way of economy.

<sup>34</sup> The Socialist mayor of an Illinois city says: "Some people expected the co-operative commonwealth to be established three minutes after the Socialists were installed."

<sup>35</sup> This conference discussed predominantly practical problems of city government and such expressions as this were heard from delegates: "We are glad that in our city we are a minority in office, for this gives us a chance to learn without making serious mistakes." The Socialists of Milwaukee are doing much for the education of Socialist officials in other places. In addition to the conference of mayors and aldermen, which evidently had this end in view, they are drawing up models for work and action and are planning a guidebook for the use of Socialists elsewhere.

<sup>36</sup> This will be especially true in the case of types 3 and 7 in the small towns where the Socialists are most theoretical and the present results most fortuitous.

<sup>37</sup> The membership of the party has nearly doubled since the Milwaukee victory. The Socialist party has an advantage over the Republicans and Democrats, other things being equal, in that its membership is definitely pledged, its local branches hold meetings throughout the year, and its paid organizers are always in the field.

<sup>38</sup> Socialists of the creedalistic type will doubtless find this discussion of possibilities superficial because nothing is said of economic determinism. The preceding analysis seems to the writer to justify silence on this point in this connection.

The lack of consistency in American Socialism, indicated by this study, is due largely to its varying degrees of youth in different sections of the country and to its practical inexperience. There seems to be a definite law of the development of Socialism which applies both to the individual and to the group. The law is this: The creedalism and immoderateness of Socialism, other things being equal, vary inversely with its age and responsibility. The average Socialist recruit begins as a theoretical impossibilist and develops gradually into a constructive opportunist. Add a taste of real responsibility and he is hard to distinguish from a liberal reformer. It is the same with the movement. These Socialist successes in general, therefore, are a training school of constructive democracy. This fact should calm the fears and allay the prejudices of all those who have a real faith in the people.

ROBERT F. HOXIE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO